



G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow, and orphan

FOCUSED ON YOU

DECEMBER 2019

Managing Stress During the Holiday Season

Pay attention to your level of stress, which may increase during the holidays. Stress comes in many forms and can have a negative effect on health if it continues too long or feels overwhelming. Many tools are available to help you manage or reduce your stress.

Basic Stress Management Suggestions:

Physical Activity— Take a brisk walk or do something else that is active. Regular physical activity is best for reducing stress.

Problem Solving—Learn problem solving skills! They can improve your ability to cope. There is a web-based problem-solving program available and your VA may offer a class. See Veteran training in the helpful web-sites below.

Relaxation Training— Learn relaxation and mindfulness skills. These skills can help you to notice and manage the responses in your body that come with stress. Daily relaxation may protect you from some of the consequences of stress.

Expression— Speak up in respectful ways. Sharing thoughts and feelings in an assertive, respectful manner can help buffer stress. Keeping negative thoughts inside can increase feelings of stress.

Time Management— List what needs to get done, make plans for addressing issues, and stick to the plan. There are many resources on time management in libraries and on-line.

Positive Thinking— Stress is often associated with



negative thinking. Focus your attention on positive thoughts. It may help to practice gratitude by:

- * Listing at least 3 things each day that you feel grateful for
- * Asking others what they are grateful for
- * Expressing gratitude by thanking others
- * Asking yourself, when facing a challenge, “What can I be grateful for in this situation?”

Pleasant Activities— You may be feeling the effects of stress if you are not making time for fun in your life. Plan to have regular, enjoyable activities and see if this reduces your stress.

Social Support—Building social connections can help stress seem more manageable. Consider ways to connect with others, such as:

- * Volunteering
- * Walking with a partner
- * Planning a get together with family or friends
- * Take a class or join a club
- * Contact a friend by phone or text or email

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VA has a few apps that are specifically for Veterans and their families:



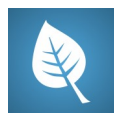
Breathe2Relax* App—learn deep breathing skills. Free of charge and available on the App Store.



PTSD Coach Mobile App—free of charge and available on the App Store. The PTSD Coach App helps you learn about and cope with the symptoms related to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that commonly occurs following trauma.



Moving Forward—is useful for anyone with stressful problems. It is especially helpful in managing challenges such as returning to civilian life, balancing school and family life, financial difficulties, relationship problems, difficult career decisions, and coping with physical injuries.



Mindfulness Coach—designed to help Veterans, Service members and others learn how to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness means paying attention, on purpose, to whatever is going on in the present moment without passing judgment on it.



Additional relaxation training and stress management resources are available at

<https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>



Veterans Crisis Line, including on-line chat service and text option for Suicide Prevention.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Suicide Prevention campaign expanded its outreach to all Veterans with an online one-to-one chat service. It is designed for those Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet and is at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>. Veterans may also reach confidential help by sending a text to **838255** or calling **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** and pressing option 1.

Wellness Tips to Fight Flu and Other Germs

The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated, but good health habits can help too. This flu season, fight flu and stay healthy by:

Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.

Protect yourself from getting sick too by keeping your distance from people who are sick.

Staying home if you're sick.

To avoid the spread of flu to others, if possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.

Covering your coughs and sneezes.

When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue to help prevent the spread of germs.

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Health Care Facility earns “*LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader*” Designation in HRC Foundation’s Healthcare Equality Index

G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center joins 406 health care providers nationwide earning the “LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader” designation

The G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center has been recognized as an “LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader” designation from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC). The designation was awarded in the 12th edition of HRC’s [Healthcare Equality Index \(HEI\)](#), released today. A record 680 health care facilities actively participated in the HEI 2019 survey, with HRC Foundation proactively researching key policies at 1000 additional non-participating hospitals. Of those included in the HEI, 406 earned a “*LGBTQ health care Equality Leader*” designation.

“As the Trump-Pence administration continues to attack the most fundamental rights of LGBTQ people, including rolling back non-discrimination protections in the Affordable Care Act and promoting a license to discriminate in health care, it is more important than ever that health care institutions stand with the LGBTQ community,” said **HRC President Alphonso David**. “The health care facilities that participate in HRC’s Healthcare Equality Index are making clear that they stand on the side of fairness and are committed to providing inclusive care to their LGBTQ patients. Going beyond inclusive non-discrimination policies, these health care facilities are adopting best practices in the areas of LGBTQ patient care and support, employee policies and benefits, and LGBTQ patient and community engagement. We commend all of the HEI participants for their commitment to providing inclusive care for all.”



[The 12th edition of the HEI](#) assesses participants on four criteria: Non-Discrimination and Staff Training, Patient Services and Support, Employee Benefits and Policies, and Patient and Community Engagement.

In the 2019 report, an impressive 406 facilities earned HRC’s “*LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader*” designation, receiving the maximum score in each section and earning an overall score of 100. Another 148 facilities earned the “*Top Performer*” designation for scoring from 80 to 95 points. With 81% of participating facilities scoring 80 points or more, health care facilities are demonstrating concretely that they are going beyond the basics when it comes to adopting policies and practices in LGBTQ care.

The remarkable progress reflected in the 2019 HEI includes:

Over half of HEI participants now have written gender transition guidelines;

75% of hospitals surveyed offer trans-inclusive benefits -- an impressive eight percentage point increase over last year, and numbers that bring them on par with their corporate counterparts, as measured by HRC’s 2019 [CEI](#);

A 35% increase in training hours recorded -- clocking in at more than 94,000 hours of LGBTQ care training provided;

A 60% increase in the number of HEI participants whose electronic health records capture a patient's sexual orientation, and a 40% increase in the number of HEI participants whose electronic health records capture a patient's gender identity.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is education arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.

Wellness Tips to Fight Flu and Other Germs (continued from page 2)

Cleaning your hands often.

Clean hands help keep germs away. Use an alcohol hand rub or soap and water.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Getting enough sleep and exercise, eating a balanced diet, and drinking plenty of fluids are other ways that you can protect yourself from getting sick.

Make sure you and your loved ones are protected against flu by getting the flu shot. Veterans enrolled in VA health care can get a free flu shot by visiting their nearest VA health care facility.

The highest number of lab-confirmed flu tests (positive flu tests per 100,000 Veterans) were seen in Illinois (36.9), Nevada (14.9), Wyoming (10) & Mississippi (9.9).

Flu Vaccines are offered at the Medical Center and Community Based Outpatient VA Clinics on the following days/times:

Jackson VAMC

Influenza Immunization Fairs

- Every Wednesday from October 9 – December 18, 2019 and every other Wednesday from January 8 – March 26, 2020 from 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.
- Drive Thru Flu Clinic – West Entrance of the Medical Center on December 7, 2019 from 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Community Based Outpatient VA Clinics

Columbus

- Monday – Thursday (No appointment needed) 1-4 p.m.

Greenville

- Monday – Thursday (No appointment needed from 8 – 10 a.m. and 1 – 4 p.m.
- Friday (No appointment needed) from 1 – 4 p.m.

Hattiesburg

- Friday (No appointment needed) from 1 – 4 p.m.

Kosciusko

- Monday – Friday (Please call 662-289-2880 to schedule an appointment) from 1 – 4p.m.

McComb

- Tuesday – Friday (No appointment needed) From 1 – 4 p.m.

Meridian

- Monday – Friday (No appointment needed) from 8 a.m. – Noon and 1 – 3 p.m.

Natchez

- Monday – Friday (Please Call 601-442-7141 to schedule an appointment) from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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